1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

597 While the lieutenant attached no significance to the painting, the
648 procedure would seem to have been a ceremonial adoption, such as might, for example, be used in connection with a confederate clan. The description of the painting is sufficiently explicit to identify the totem with that of the Turtle clan, represented by the clanmother and the daughter of the clan at Costa Rica in 1894 (plates XVIII and XXIV); but it is noteworthy that the salutation with which the ceremony terminated, and which may be rendered "Captain-Brother of the Sharks", would seem to identify the totem with the shark rather than the turtle.[1]

The second case of adoption (if so it may be styled) was that of Señor Encinas, after his bloodiest battle, in which nearly all of the Seri warriors were left on the field. In this case there was no ceremony, or at least none remembered by the beneficiary; he was merely informed by a delegation of aged dames that thenceforth he would be regarded as a stronger and more invulnerable chief (shaman) than any member of the tribe, and hence as the tribal leader.

The third instance is still less definite, though it seems to be trust-
173 worthy. There is a widespread tradition throughout Sonora that in
563 the course of a brush between a band of Papago hunters and a maraud-
727 ing bunch of Seri warriors in the mountains southeast of Cieneguilla twenty-five or thirty years ago, a Papago maiden was captured and carried off to Tiburon; and that for some years thereafter—i. e., until the Papago had taken ample blood-vengeance—the intertribal animosity was exceptionally bitter. No wholly satisfactory basis for the traditions could be found among the Papago, though some of the silences of the old men were suggestive; nor was the tradition fully credited by Señor Encinas, despite its deep lodgment in the minds of some of his yoemanry. When Mashém was interrogated on different occasions, he merely shook his head in stolid silence; but when the device was adopted of inquiring the number of Papago children brought into the tribe through this woman he responded promptly with a snort of scorn, and followed this with the explanation that she never had children, and could not because she was an alien slave. The explanation was corroborated by clanmother Juana María and other matrons, with sundry expressions of contemptuous disapproval of the inquiry and scorn of the very idea that aliens could fructify within the tribe. Later, the ice being broken, Mashém intimated that the woman had recently died of old age and its consequences—doubtless as an outcast. On the whole, the direct testimony would seem to substantiate the tradition, and to supplement it with the short and simple annals of a spouseless and childless life (incredible of other tribes, but consistent

[1] This identification may possibly be correct, the collocation of the totem with the turtle was shaped through unwilling and perhaps misleading responses made by Mashém to inquiries in 1894—these responses denoting a sea monster which in the beginning helped the Ancient of Pelicans to make the world by pushing from below, and which is now very good food—a description apparently fitting the turtle more closely than the other animal.

[124]
[773]

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

McGEE ON THE SERI

114 [128] The pages that follow deal with McGee's well-known monograph on the Seri,[1] discussing first points on which his data are fuller or mine confirm or modify his, and then points on which I believe him to have been in error or to have misconstrued his observations. McGee spent little more time in actual contact with the Seri than I did.[2] His work impresses me as that of an extraordinarily good observer, keen in seeing significant evidence, but of uncontrolled imagination and unconscious of his preconceptions. It is only fair to state that where he founds an interpretation on slender or uncertain data, he generally indicates the fact to a careful reader.

Data and Discussion

114 415 The ratio of kilogram weight to liter capacity of water jars is given by McGee (p. 183) as follows: 2 Seri, .126-.147; 2 Papago, .239-.279; 4 modern Pueblo, .252-.295. There is no doubt that the Seri olla is unusually thin-walled. Sherds seen at a campsite near San Rafael, on the dry course of the Bacuachi, 20 or more miles from the coast, ran from 2 to 5.5 millimeters in thickness, averaging 3.8; their curvature was slight, indicating large vessels. McGee remarks (p. 184) that the purpose of nearly all Seri pottery is to hold or transport water, other uses being secondary, generally after breakage. My observations on the island confirm this.

114 Head loads are carried on a ring of "yucca" fiber (p. 184).

482 The carrying stick or yoke, with nets to hold ollas, is considered accultural by McGee (p. 184), although he mentions (p. 68) that Ugarte in 1721 saw the device in use by men, the women carrying single ollas, presumably on their heads. Nordenskiöld has recently shown the "coolie yoke" to be ancient in the area.[3] It is used today in Sinaloa and Sonora.

114 773 McGee (pp. 11, 191, 292) thought that he understood that the "Ancient of Pelicans" was the chief creative deity and brought up the islands and earth with the help of the Turtle or Shark. This

[1] W J McGee, The Seri Indians, BAE-R 17, part 1, pp. 1-128, 129*-344*, 1898. (In citations of the higher page numbers, the asterisk is omitted.)

[2] McGee (pp. 13, 98, 291) in 1894 spent "about a week" at Costa Rica west of Hermosillo where some 60 Seri were temporarily congregated, his principal informants being subchief Mashém who spoke Spanish, and Juana María. A Spanish-English interpreter is referred to. In 1895 the coast and Tiburon Island were visited, camps examined, but not a single Seri encountered. The vocabulary was obtained chiefly at Hermosillo from Kahuin, an old Seri official interpreter who had left the island in childhood, never revisited it, considered himself an outlaw in Seri eyes, and had long had no dealings with them except under Mexican protection. I spent six days or parts of days with Seri, sleeping two nights on Punta San Miguel and three in the *ranchería* on the island opposite. Two Seri accompanied us back to Hermosillo to draw their government stipends, and were available for some supplementary questioning and revision of notes on the two following days.

[3] Comparative Ethnographical Studies, No. 8, 284, 1930.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

sounds like an expectable enough mythic idea, but seems involved with McGee's dubious conceptions as to totemism, discussed below. 114 193

The two-pointed fish-spear, with serrated points 6 inches long and spreading 5°, seen by Hardy (McGee, p. 193), is interesting because seemingly unreported in or near the area. 114 227

"Fishing" with staked pelicans who are then fed by free birds, is authenticated by the statement of Venegas for lower California, (McGee, p. 193). [226 231]

No fish nets, hooks, or lines were seen by McGee among the abandoned effects on Tiburon (p. 194). This is in accord with my observation. The abundance of sharks may interfere with net or deep water fishing.

The bow (p. 200) is of *palo blanco;* the release (pls. 28, 29), Mediterranean; the archer's position (pl. 29), with elbow above head, suggests a quick downward shot at a target or game lying on the ground not far away. 114 411

Mesquite, according to McGee (p. 207), is ground on the metate. Sr. Thomson told me of its being pounded in a hole in the ground. The Seri gave me the name a'kata for what I understood to be this earth mortar. According to Sr. Thomson's description, the flour from the first beans cakes and lines the cavity firmly, so that the bulk of the material is secured quite cleanly. In general, mesquite is mortar-pounded rather than metate-ground by the tribes from whom we have records, as is expectable from the woody nature of the beans. 114 252

McGee (p. 207) noted the viznaga cactus, Echinocistus, as rare in the Seri habitat, presumably owing to its use for water by the natives. I made the same observation on the mainland, but Sr. Thomson stated that along the roads the plant is being gathered for candying. 114 137

The one basket described by McGee (p. 208, fig. 24) is bundle-coiled and plain. The only one I saw in use among the Seri was ornamented with a plain reddish band. Sr. Thomson presented me with two which bear patterns (fig. 13), and showed me a photograph of a collection made by Mr. Davis for the Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, nearly all of which were decorated, some fairly elaborately. Several of these are shown by courtesy of that institution in figure 12. As McGee observes, there is obvious resemblance to Southwestern baskets; especially of the Papago, Pima, and Apache. Southern California basketry is less similar. That of Baja California is unknown from specimens, though the mention of water-tight vessels used for winnowing and parching suggests a coiled tray of Seri type. The surviving tribes of Sonora other than the Seri use few baskets distinguishable from those of the non-Indian population. 114 285 [191]

3:Davis & Dawson I-5 (1822-1940) 1945
MU31 Seri MU31

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Sea turtle was still the staple meat, and with better boats and improved tools and tackle borrowed from the Mexicans, the living was becoming considerably less harsh along the shores. They then had nine boats for some two hundred people. One good boat could secure a living for five families, and they had well improved this minimum standard of living.

[161]

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The origin of the use of fire among the Seri's is unknown, but they have their own story of it. One day Chico Rosnero, present chief of the Seris (Fig. 19), made a fire drill out of a piece of dry driftwood and showed how to make a fire by turning the stick between the hands. In three or four minutes the fine dust became a glowing punk which, with the aid of some dry grass and the wind, was quickly fanned into a flame. He was then induced to tell the legend. He looked about and pointed to a little green and blue-bodied fly and said: "The gods sent this fly down from the sky to show us how to make fire. Notice when it lands. Did you not see

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FIG. 18. THE NATIVE DANCE
IS DONE ON TOP OF A TURTLE SHELL TO THE BEAT OF A BOW STRING BEING STRUCK WHILE THE BOW IS HELD AGAINST TWO INVERTED BASKETS OR SAFES.

[p. 265 (B)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
NU31 Seri NU31

it take its two hands, rub them over its head and then rub them together a few times? The Indians noticed this and in this way we were taught by this little fly how to make fire by rubbing a stick back and forth between our two hands."

In response to comments about the nocturnal howling of the coyote, Chico told another interesting tribal legend. "A long time ago all Seris were birds or animals. The badger had charge of the saints or gods, which were little images carried in a pouch and hung around his neck by black strings.

FIG. 19. CHICO ROMERO
WHO SUCCEEDED OLD JUAN TOMAS AS CHIEF OF SERIS.

Coyote got to quarreling with badger and, watching his chance, grabbed the bag, tore it loose and ran off with it, giving his derisive laugh as he ran, and ever since coyote has been laughing at badger and all others.

773 Before this it was day all the time, but then it became night and coyote only laughs at night. The black strings still hang about badger's neck."

It is strange to find, too, that a flood legend is traditional among the Seris. Chico said: "In the times of the ancients a great flood came, the ocean rose up and all the country of the Seris was under water except the top of Cerro Alto. There a few Seris gathered and were saved. Everyone else was drowned. To this day the top of Cerro Alto is covered with brush which the flood did not submerge. All Seri children are taught this flood tradition, and they must learn it by heart so as to teach their children and their grandchildren."

764 The death of a tribesman gives no cause for ceremony among the Seris, although the [765] nearest relatives may customarily wail, sometimes for months, morning and evening. The disposal of the bodies of the dead, is, however, of considerable interest. A hole about [412] three feet deep is dug by means of large clam shells and a cave is excavated for the head such that the earth will not touch it. The deceased Indian is wrapped in his own blanket and laid in the grave with the head to the East, face up. The body is covered and the grave is partly filled with earth, then covered with a layer of the spiniest of chollas and thorny brush, further filled, leveled and covered with another layer of chollas to discourage the coyotes from digging up the body. When the Seris are on the move, how- [766] ever, and grave-digging is too great a task, a body may simply be lifted high to the fork of a giant cactus and left there.

583 Marriage among the Seris is not so much a ceremony as it is the completion of a bar- 585 gain. Under ordinary circumstances, when a man buys a woman he strikes a bargain with the bride's parents and makes a down payment. Only after completion of the bargain does the woman go to live with the man, but even then payments do not cease but continue intermittently through life. Chico Romero, although "married" for fifteen years, gave his wife's father some paint that he had received in payment for guiding and 425 packing. It is also considered natural to 858 buy and sell children. One Seri, Santo

[p. 266 (B)]
[text continues on p. 267 (B)]

9:Malkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

Coyote figures out probably

as an important and perhaps disreputable figure in the mythology although nothing but scraps and bits of information suggest this. It is possible that there is actually a taboo on eating this animal or perhaps it is so disreputable that eating its flesh would put a gourmant in an inferior position.

How important is the Seri mammalian diet is hard to tell. It certainly looms more heavily during the winter, because in the cool season hunting is easier than during the heat of the summer and in fact this is when most of it is done by the ardent hunters. Too, winter subjects the Seris to greater hazards and is apt to increase their dependence on the desert resources over that during the summer, even if these resources are scantier at that time.

To all of these animals one should add the semi-wild burros running about the extensive Mexican rancherias. The Indians poach on them frequently using their fire arms, usually the .22 caliber rifles. In any case, it appears that during the summer when the field work was carried out, the mammalian diet figures quite lightly on the Seri table.

Food preparation: Very little is done in the preparation of the mammalian meat. All that I could observe was the boiling of it in hot water spiced with salt. The Indians were saying that in order to have the meat of a peccary, deer or bighorn ready to eat one must boil it 2-8 hours. The same procedure is followed with the meat of the burros. In contrast to this, as shall be seen later, fish are boiled as well as roasted while the turtles are also dried and salted. Preparation of meat is done by women, certainly at least in the encampments when they are present.

Food preferences: Some of the Seri food preferences have already been mentioned. At the top of the list as the desirables are the peccary, the deer, the bighorn and the blacktail jackrabbit; at the bottom is the badger, whose meat "is not much good." There is also preference by sex. Females of both the bighorn and peccary are preferred over the males "because they do not have the bad odor like the males." This sort of favoritism also occurs among the Mexicans. However, the Indians did not elaborate beyond this point.

Other economic uses: Apart from meat, hides are also used. The hides of the deer, bighorn and peccary had been used for sleeping mats although this matter has been expressed in the past tense. Miguel Barnett also suggested that the bighorn hides had been used for clothing by the Indians in the past—but he neglected to say how long ago. During Kroeber's stays, no Seris went about in the animal or bird (pelican) skins but earlier when McGee visited them they went about in these simple garments. Judging then by Miguel's memory, the use of the bighorn hide for clothing must be pushed back to the period of World War I or even earlier.

Miguel Barnett indicated that the "fur" of the bighorn had once been worn for the cold season "but not now."

[P 10 A]

123 relief and contentment rose, and everybody smiled. This concoction I placed on the fire while the Indian stirred with a long stick. It took half an hour to cook into a thick sticky paste, gummy white.

[315] Meanwhile, the women vanished and returned with various vessels: greasy baskets, a black chamber pot, frying pans, ollas, stew pots, shells, any old thing---even a cuspidor. When ready, the Indians dipped the sticky mess out with a cup into the various vessels and the women and children licked it up. Some of the children covered the back of a large clam shell with the paste and then licked it off, repeating this until it was gone. Most of the people hooked their fingers into it and licked them off time and again. Any drip on the outside was carefully licked off that four gallons of goo. I do not think one single drop was lost.

126 123 As one little girl was carrying away a clam shell of paste I secured her photograph. It was a sight not soon to be forgotten, to watch these little ones dip in their fingers, mostly two, sometimes three fingers and contentedly lick them off.

Wishing to secure a photo of the Indians in Pelican skin kilts, Roberto induced Chico Romero to strip and wrap a kilt of Pelican skins around his waist. He did this and Roberto secured a good photograph. For this service, Chico demanded three oranges which he gave to his children.

By coaxing and wheedling and joking, Roberto finally persuaded a young woman to put on the Pelican kilt, and she gradually pulled off her shirt, or waist, or whatever name it goes by, and laughingly permitted it. As her brown shoulders and breasts were exposed she covered them with her arms and hands while I took the photo. I gave her some blue powder to decorate herself and a little round mirror.

372 Chico Romero made a fire drill out of a piece of dry driftwood from a cottonwood tree, and then made a fire by turning the stick between his hands. After three or four minutes the fine dust became punk and turned into a live coal. This he carefully put in some dry grass and by holding it up in the wind it was fanned into a flame. The price of this was a red bandanna.

372 773 825 The legend of Fire was told to me later by the campfire. The Seris' god sent down a fly to Seriland to show the Indians how to make fire. The fly was pointed out to me one day. It was a trifle larger than a house fly with a body of shining green and blue.

"Now," they said to me, "notice when it lands. Did you not see it take its two hands, rub them over its head and then rub them together a few times?". . ."Each time it settles it rubs its hands together, and our Indians noticed this and in this way we were taught by this little fly how to make fire by rubbing a stick between our two hands, back and forth. One fly came to earth and found something dead and he rubbed a stick between his hands and made a smoke signal

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826 so all the other flies could see and also come to this dead thing."

787 A few weeks ago, Antonio Herrera had a very vivid dream. He dreamed
[158] that he was hunting in the mountains for deer and came across a cave. (These volcanic mountains are pitted with caves.) He went into the cave and saw all kinds of things dear to the heart of a Seri---plenty of rifles, lots of cartridges, knives, *manta* (unbleached cotton), necklaces, red bandannas, blue overalls, *plata*, or silver, and many other things.

[758] When he awoke he sought his father Manuel Encinas, who is a medicine man and interpreter of dreams, to explain his dream to him. The price demanded by Manuel was six *tiras*---or 30-30 cartridges, a very high price, according to Seri standard. The explanation was this:

It was true that the cave was there and all the things in it just as seen and described by Antonio, but in order to find it he would have to fast nine days and go without water that length of time also, in the heat of summer. Then the way would appear to reach the cave. So far, Antonio has not attempted the fast.

381 I witnessed the operation of making a certain kind of pitch or
396 tar which the Seris use to make the seams in their canoes or boats tight. The women pound up the dried pulp next to the outside skin of a dead *pitahalla* cactus (organ cactus). This is very dry and brown in color and the pieces are pounded up to a dry powder with a wash or shore rock in a dried deer hide. This is placed in a *batello*, or flat basket, and manipulated so that the coarse pieces come to the top and are scraped off and thrown away. The fine powder is then put in a five gallon can and some porpoise or sea-lion oil or horse oil is poured on it and stirred into a thick gummy mass. When thoroughly mixed it is put over the fire, in an olla, to boil and continually stirred for an hour or two until it is the consistency and has the appearance of coal tar. While being worked it is kept heated and applied to seams inside and outside the boat. It hardens just like tar and answers the same purpose.

123 Since the corn, which had kept this band of Seris in food, disap-
226 peared two days before we came, and they had barely kept going on
[189] seeds and a few fish, and they all had decided to leave camp with us in the morning---the women walking and the men and some children in boats---it was necessary to supply them with some food to take them to the hunting grounds of the *cahuama*, or sea turtles, and land them
[262] on the Island. The *cahuama* would furnish them meat---their favorite and national food, and the shores would supply them with clams, oysters, crabs and other sea food.

123 So the whole band was called around our camp and each family was furnished with two cups of corn, two of beans, some green coffee and a cup of cube sugar. For the first time our camp was free of Indians, and we ate and went to bed in peace.

The amenities of civilization were laid aside and forgotten in